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Van Buren District Library, several townships, discuss decades old contract governing branch libraries

By Paul Garrod
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DECATUR - Following a nearly three-hour meeting, that included a nearly 55-minuite closed session by the Van Buren District Library Board, Tuesday, Feb. 24, The Van Buren District Library Board plans to update a decades-old contract with the seven district branch libraries that are serviced by the District Library.

Approximately half of the 30-plus people in the audience were made up of branch library patrons from Lawrence and Mattawan.

A Lawrence Branch Library patron, Bette Glindmeyer, told the Library District Board, "I would like to express my support for a contract to be negotiated between the district library and the townships involved in an expedited manner.

"Whether it is the inability or unwillingness on the part of the District Director, the Library Board or the Townships to negotiate an agreement, the current problem has existed too long.

"The entities involved have a fiduciary responsibility to represent the taxpayers – that's all of us – by spending tax monies wisely. Hiring attorneys to do what should be the responsibility of the entities is not, in my opinion, a good use of our tax money."

She concluded, "Without antagonizing each other, the goal should be the same – keep our community libraries open."

Daywi Cook, Covert Township Supervisor, told the District Library Board, "Covert Township has proudly partnered with the Van Buren District Library since 1945 and has operated under the current agreement since 1997. At that time, Covert Branch Library was housed in the lower level of an historic Township - owned building that was already being maintained locally.

"In 2009, we broke ground on a new 5,000 square-foot- library facility, which opened in 2010 and now serves approximately 2,800 Covert residents."

She further stated, "From a financial standpoint, I reviewed maintenance costs for our 16 year old facility. While costs fluctuate, the Township averages approximately $2,500 annually in maintenance expenses, including Department of Public Works labor. We have also been fortunate to avoid major repairs thus far."

She continued, "The proposed annual payment of $7,500 is generous, and I commend the VBDL Board for recognizing the potential impact of eliminating this funding. However, the current addendum language places future maintenance payments solely at the discretion of the VBDL Board. As written, this creates uncertainly for municipal partners and leaves long-term facility maintenance without a predictable funding structure."

Daywi said, "We respectfully request several reasonable improvements to the amendment:

Provide clearer language defining eligible uses of maintenance funds. Establish a consistent annual payment date.

Include a cost-sharing mechanism for repairs exceeding the maintenance fund balance.

Make maintenance payments mandatory with periodic review to account for changes in building conditions or tax revenue.

She concluded, "Our shared goal is simple: to preserve these facilities and continue delivering high-quality library services to our communities. We value this partnership and ask that we continue working collaboratively to ensure its long-term success."

The District Library Board in 2021 discontinued sharing $5,000 with its district branches.

Ruzick noted that the Antwerp Sunshine Branch Library would need new windows, and a new roof.

"This is serious funds that we are going to be spending. We certainly can't do it on our own, especially when you stop the funds," he said.

Ruzick told the District Library Board and the audience in attendance, "We would love a new contract with you folks and quarterly payments of $2,500."

The following day, Wednesday, Feb. 25, Ruzick drafted a letter to the District Library Board in which he shared with The Courier-Leader.

It read in part: "I am writing to clarify several points discussed at last night's meeting regarding the current 1997 contract. As you are aware, the Van Buren County District Library received a letter dated Dec. 13, 2025, from the Antwerp Township Board of Trustees providing official notice that the existing contract is no longer acceptable to Antwerp Township. With the Board's rejection of the newly proposed contract at last night's meeting, the 180-day period from Dec. 13, 2025, notice remains in effect. This establishes a deadline of June 14, 2026, for the District Library to present Antwerp Township with a new proposed contract outlining your terms, at which time the Township may review and either accept or deny the proposal.

"During the discussion, several Board members referenced amending the 1997 contract.

"I appreciate the encouragement expressed regarding incorporating the proposed $25,000 repayment to the Township for five years of non-payment. However, I continue to have significant concerns about ensuring that contract terms are equitable and consistent across all municipalities within the district.

"As you know, Antwerp Township provides the largest facility in the district at 6,680 square feet and maintains the highest circulation among the branches. While the Township initially proposed a one-year agreement and the Board discussed the possibility of a multi-year contract, I will await the Board's formal proposal before commenting further on contract length.

He concluded, "I remain optimistic that we can reach mutually agreeable terms prior to the June 14, 2026, deadline. Antwerp Township is committed to the continued success of its library branch. However, we are seeking a partnership that reflects shared responsibility for the branch's operation and sustainability, rather than placing the full financial burden on the Antwerp Township general fund."

Paw Paw Library's outdoor space begins to take shape

The Paw Paw District Libray's empty lot begins to take shape with a pavilion and mini amphitheater being recently placed. Also planned for the space are walking paths. Construction is scheduled to continue next month and be wrapped up in June. Funding for the project was made possible by donations, grants and library savings.

Courier-Leader photo/Paul Garrod

Brave citizens rescue two from fire

By Gari Voss

Ricky Holly and Emily Steward came upon a burning home on CR 653 in Pine Grove Township before 9am on Saturday, February 28, 2026. The pair quickly went into action by calling 911 to contact the Gobles Pine Grove Fire Department. Then they entered the burning building to remove two residents and a couple of their pets before the fire trucks arrived.

Shortly before 9:00 am, the Gobles Pine Grove Fire Department and Bloomingdale firefighters were dispatched in response to a report of a structure fire in the 11000 block of CR 653 in Pine Grove Township.

Upon arrival, the fire crews found that two occupants and dogs had been moved to safety by the brave bystanders who had alerted 911 of the fire.

The crews immediately began working on the fire through the heavy smoke coming from the home. An aggressive interior attack and search was done locating the heavy fire in the ceiling of the home with extension into the first floor as well.

Other dogs and cats were located during fire attack and search and brought to safety.

Due to an immediate roof collapse of the home, the fire was difficult to contain, but crews worked tirelessly and were able to save most of the structure.

Pine Grove Fire Chief Brian Cronk wanted to thank the amazing mutual aid partner, the Bloomingdale Fire Department, for the assistance on scene.

"We would also like to thank LIFE EMS, Van Buren County Sheriff Department deputies and animal control," scribed Cronk. "We would especially like to thank Ricky Holly and Emily Stewart of Plainwell, who put their lives in harms way in order to run inside a burning building to save the two occupants and animals prior to our arrival."

In closing, Cronk stated, "Our hearts go out to the family who lost their home, and our thoughts are with you during this difficult time."

Steve Richardson named "firefighter of the year"

Former Lawrence Township Emergency Services Fire Chief Steve Richardson, left, was recently named LTES Firefighter of the Year. A recent social media post by LTES said of Ricjhardson, "He is a mentor to all of us and helped guide the department with his vast knowledge before shifting to teach future generations at Van Buren Tech in the Fire Science program. Richardson, an active member of LTES, received an award ax made by a LTES member. Richardson is shown with LTES Fire Chief William "Bill" Featherstone.

Photo courtesy/LTES

Decatur's beloved Hard Times Restaurant reopens

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held last week for the newly reopened Hard Times Family Restaurant in Decatur. Photo from the Village of Decatur, MI's Facebook page.

Jordan Wilcox Assistant Publisher

For more than 40 years, Hard Times Family Restaurant has served as a local gathering place where friends meet, families connect, and traditions are built. After being closed for several months, the beloved Decatur establishment was purchased by Lori and David Walker.

Lori Walker is a lifelong Decatur resident who worked at Hard Times for more than 40 years alongside the restaurant's original founder and her close friend, Deb Tuka. Her longstanding connection to the restaurant makes the reopening especially meaningful for the Walker family.

The Walkers purchased the restaurant late last year and celebrated the eatery's grand reopening on February 7th. Last week, the Village of Decatur and the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber welcomed them back to the business community with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"We're thrilled to bring Hard Times Family Restaurant back to life," the Walkers wrote on Facebook. "Our goal is to once again provide our patrons with the same warm, welcoming atmosphere and great home-cooked meals that generations of families in Decatur have come to love."

"Their support and cooperation made this transition smooth and meaningful," the Walkers continued, referring to Dan and Janice Benson, who assisted throughout the purchase process. "We're grateful for their trust and for the opportunity to carry on the Hard Times legacy."

"In addition, we cannot thank the community of Decatur enough for the incredible support and encouragement we have received so far. The outpouring of kindness and excitement from friends, neighbors, and loyal patrons has truly inspired us."

Hard Times Family Restaurant is located at 108 N Phelps Street in Downtown Decatur. They're open from 6:30 a.m. to 2:00 pm, Wednesday through Sunday.

County commissioners approve mental health board reappointments

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
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PAW PAW - Van Buren County commissioners on Feb. 24, approved the re-appointments of Carol Sjoquist and Michael Saenz to the Van Buren County Community Mental Health Board for a three-year term, April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2029.

Commissioners approved the re-appointment of Sandy Hanson to the Van Buren District Library Board for a four-year term, Jan. 1, 2026, through Dec. 31, 2029.

Commissioners said Hanson is the only District Library Board trustee appointed by Van Buren County government, with the other seven District Library Board trustees being appointed by local municipalities contained within the Library District's service area, which covers exactly two thirds of Van Buren County.

Hartford City and Township, The Village of Lawton, the Paw Paw School District, and South Haven City and Township are not contained within Van Buren District Library's service area, thus those communities have their own public libraries independent of the Van Buren District Library system.

Commissioners further stated, "Ms. Hanson is an asset to the VBDL. In addition to being an avid user of the Library District's Webster Memorial Branch, she is also a member of the Hamilton Township Board of Trustees, bringing the benefit of her public service experience to the Library Board. She is thoroughly engaged in setting the direction of the District Library, and assuring it is operated in an ethical and fiscally responsible manner. VBDL would like to continue to avail itself of Ms. Hanson's considerable knowledge, wisdom, and concern for the community."

Commissioners approved out of state travel for approximately 8 to 9 Specialty Courts team members to attend the All Rise Conference in Nashville, Tenn., from July 19-24, 2026. The conference itself will be held July 20 to 23, with travel occurring the day prior to the conference and return travel following its conclusion.

The All Rise Conference is a national training event that brings together judges, court staff, treatment providers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and justice system partners from across the country. The conference offers evidence-based education, skill building workshops, and opportunities to learn about best practices, emerging research, and innovative approaches in treatment courts and problem-solving courts. It also provides valuable networking opportunities with professionals engaged in similar work.

Commissioners said the financial impact to the county would be the initial outlay, which will be fully reimbursed through the grant awards. The funds have been allocated within the county's federal grant awards for travel, including one that requires the attendance of the Specialty Court administrator.

Paw Paw Post seeking help identifying fraud victims

PAW PAW - Troopers from the Michigan State Police (MSP) Paw Paw Post are attempting to identify individuals throughout Southwest Michigan who have had contact with or entered into agreements with anyone claiming to represent Blue Frog Restorations.

Representatives of this company allegedly approach victims of storm damage and offer repair services on the condition that the homeowner signs over their insurance check.

If you or someone you know has been contacted by this company, you are urged to immediately discontinue all communication, cancel any agreements or payments, and contact D/Sgt. Ben Mahaffie at (269) 845-6948.

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2ND FRONT PAGE

Patti Montgomery Reinert and Scott Reinert sit down for a conversation

By James Windell

Pinning Patti Montgomery Reinert and Scott Reinert to a time for an interview wasn't easy. Not because they were avoiding talking about their careers as difference-makers in South Haven. Rather, because they didn't want to dominate the headlines and detract from the focus on their successors.

Nevertheless, on a recent Monday morning, we met over coffee at the Flying Saucer in downtown South Haven

And as self-effacing as they've been in the past, so they were during this casual and free-wheeling conversation.

"We had our window of opportunity to be able to make our mark on this community," Patti Montgomery Reinert said, "and it was really fun because we did it together, but it's time for someone else to take over."

Patti was referring to Bailey Sisoy-Moore, who took over in October, 2025 as Executive Director of the Michigan Maritime Museum. Reinert had served as Executive Director for more than 16 years.

Scott Reinert, too, had passed the reins on to a successor. Chris Van Hekken recently became administrator for the South Haven Area Recreation Authority, a position Scott had held for several years. Prior to that Scott had been director of the South Haven Area Convention and Visitors Bureau before Jennifer Sistrunk began leading that organization.

After living in and serving the South Haven community, the couple recently moved to Holland to be closer to their children and grandchildren.

"Holland and South Haven are not that far apart," says Patti, "but it's different when you are in the same town as your grandchildren. They just pop over, raid the refrigerator, but we can also have conversations. We used to have planned visits with them and now it's just more spontaneous. It's really nice."

Not that they have abandoned South Haven.

"We return to South Haven often as it will always have a special place in our hearts," says Patti, "but, honestly, it was good for me, because it wasn't as easy as I thought it would be to leave the Michigan Maritime Museum. Living away from South Haven gives us a chance to step back a little bit and give Bailey the room she needs."

Still, letting go of the organizations they have been passionately working to promote hasn't been easy for either of them.

"We made a conscious decision to take 6 or 12 months to see what the Lord has planned for us next," explains Scott. "I think we will always be involved in the community, no matter where we are, and try to give back and contribute."

Looking back on their accomplishments, they are proud of what they did in their roles. But working constantly to make things happen was exhausting, too.

"I think for me it was a big responsibility, especially over the last five or six years because besides running the Museum I was also playing a really big role in the whole fundraising campaign," Patti says. "It was almost like two jobs. As proud as I am as to how everything turned out, it was a lot of responsibility."

During Patti's years as Executive Director of the Michigan Maritime

Museum, she helped bring about considerable improvements. "When I started, the doors were almost closed and there hadn't been an Executive Director in place," she recalls.

"To have been a part of what the Museum is now is really exciting," she admits. "I still get goosebumps when I drive past the Museum because I remember what it was like before; the difficulties we had in the beginning with the lack of money and low membership. Now to see what it is now and what it can be in the future. It gives me such a sense of pride and gratefulness to have had the opportunity to be a part of that."

Patti says that Scott was such a big support as they worked towards a $10 million fundraising goal and then moving into the building they have now.

Scott has his own accomplishments to look back at. "I was director of the Convention and Visitor's Bureau for six years and then I focused on the Museum helping Patti for a year or so," Scott says. "Jennifer [Sistrunk] took my place and she was great because we had worked together for several years. But she said there were a number of projects coming up and Jen asked me if I knew anyone who could help them run those projects and I said I'll do it."

Those projects came to an end in late 2025 and he thought that given Patti's situation it would be the right time for both of them. "But the other thing that happened that gave me comfort was that we hired Chris Van Hekken at Recreation Director," Scott says. "Chris had a lot of experience so I felt very comfortable with getting him and that meant I could back off."

He admits that he and Patti both have a lot invested emotionally in their work. "So, we're both supporting the Museum and recreation as best we can," he says.

Scott sees his two biggest accomplishments as helping to bring about the purchase of the Riverwoods property on Black River and being part of the team to obtain voter approval of the Recreational millage which led to the funding and hiring an "amazing" Recreational Director for the community. "I feel proud of both, but the Riverwoods project in particular because that was something I spent a lot of time with," he says. "I can't wait to see that open. This will be an amazing asset for the community."

As our conversation came to a close, they were asked to pose for a photo. They said they didn't expect that. And then Scott summed up what both felt about an article about them.

"We're not that kind of people who want to be in the newspaper," he said. "We want to be behind the scenes and never toot our own horns."

Then he said there was a quote he liked to use.

"God can do tremendous things through those who don't care who gets the credit," he said. "That's the way I always felt. I don't care about the credit. I just want to get things done."

The South Haven JD's 4-H Club members would like to extend a THANK YOU to all the businesses that donated to the 2026 Van Buren County 4-H Leader's Association Auction.

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There will be a 4-H Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, March 7th from 8:00am to 11:30am at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Bangor.
Cost is $8 per person, 5 and under FREE
Contact: Janice Zerbe, Extension Educator at 269-657-8213 or rajzerj@msu.edu
Auctions will be held at the Pancake Breakfast in person.

The 4-H Youth appreciate the generosity of our community!

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Case conference held in Carlotto lawsuit against South Haven

By James Windell

A case conference was held on February 25, 2026, between Magistrate Phillip J. Green and the attorneys for Pat Carlotto and the City of South Haven.

Carlotto, a 25-year veteran of the South Haven Police Department, filed a lawsuit against the City of South Haven in November, 2025, after the City failed to appoint him as Chief of Police.

Carlotto was appointed interim police chief after Chief Natalie Thompson retired in September 2024. He held the role until Kevin Swope was hired in January 2025. After Chief Swope resigned just one month into his tenure, Carlotto was again named interim chief. He stepped in to lead the department while the City resumed its search for a permanent replacement.

He served in that role until Dennis Honholt began serving as Chief on April 1, 2025. Honholt resigned a month later, but no interim police chief was named immediately. Sgt. Adam DeBoer was appointed interim chief near the end of April 2025 and was in that position until recently being promoted to Chief.

In his suit, Carlotto states that he has qualifications, credentials, and experience that far exceeded those of the persons the City ended up hiring as its chief of police and that the reason he was not selected as Chief of the South Haven Police Department was because of retaliation and discriminatory treatment.

The Rule 16 scheduling conference, held on February 25, is typically where the judge sets the litigation timeline – deadlines for discovery, motions, disclosures, and other case-management issues. An order issued by Green indicates that the case is now scheduled for trial in the Federal Building in Grand Rapids on March 29, 2027.

In the case conference, it was decided that a list of witnesses that may be expected to testify in the case from both sides should be presented to the Court by the end of June of this year. Also, all discovery by both sides will be shared by August 31, 2026. Discovery is the pre-trial phase in a civil lawsuit where both sides exchange information and evidence so that each party understands the facts, strengths, and weaknesses of the case. It's designed to prevent surprises at trial and to encourage fair resolutions.

The Beacon reached out to Mark S. Wilkinson of Paladin Employment Law, PLLC in Kalamazoo, who is representing Sgt. Pat Carlotto, and to the attorney representing the City, Andrew J. Brege, with the law firm of Rosati Schultz Joppich & Amtsbuechler PC, in Farmington Hills, for comments. Both attorneys were asked if there might be a chance of a settlement before the case goes to trial in 2027. Neither attorney responded before the Beacon went to press.

Lawton Village Council approves FY 2025-26 extension budget

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

LAWTON – The Lawton Village council at its Feb. 24 meeting, approved the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Extension Budget, following an earlier public hearing.

Lawton Village Manager Todd Hackenberg gave a summary of the FY 25/26 Budget Extension. Lawton Village Council President Josh Appleby asked for any public comment during the budget hearing. With no further public comment following the public hearing, in a roll call vote, the village council approved the FY 25/26 Extension Village Budget.

Village Council President Appleby brought discussion on the police training property for annexation possibility to the floor for discussion.

The Lawton Village Council approved a motion that the Village of Lawton authorize Village Manager Hackenberg to proceed with the annexation process of village-owned property into the village limits, including but not limited to: obtaining a boundary survey and preparation of a legal description of the subject property. It was approved in a roll call vote.

In another area, the village council approved in a roll call vote, an ordinance that would revise the current village budget timeline from March 1- February 28, each year to July 1 - June 30, to be in line with Van Buren County.

The village council approved a resolution in a roll call vote to extend the current fiscal year.

Village council members approved a resolution which would vacate a public right of way located in Love's Second Addition and approved a motion to discuss the execution of the collective bargaining agreement.

The council was informed that HS Fleet has plans to move from its current location to M-40. A site plan has been approved, with construction scheduled to begin this summer.

Historic Allegan Church closed

By Gari Voss

The decision is final. The First Presbyterian Church on Cutler Street in Allegan as been closed by the Presbytery of Lake Michigan in Portage. The final service was Sunday, March 1, 2026, and members of the congregations were instructed to remove any personal items because they would no longer have access to the church or the rectory next door.

The church has been a cornerstone of the community since it was founded by settlers in 1834. Its steeple was a welcome sight to pioneers as it was like a beacon saying that Allegan was coming closer.

In resent years, the members have found numerous ways to meet needs of the Allegan community. During COVID, they found ways to feed the hungry. To assist in encouraging people to gather after COVID, Friends on Wednesdays began. A wide range of programs were offered beginning on Wednesdays but expanding to other days as they took mini-trips to other areas of Allegan County. There was usually an educational component to the gatherings, and sometimes there was a movie with popcorn.

When the weather began getting more inclement, the members teamed with Good Shepherd Episcopal Church to open the fellowship hall from 5-9pm on days that were below freezing. Anyone needing to get out of the cold could come in for a warm meal and beverages. During this ministry, they were able to assist an unhoused person get a job and rent a room in the rectory that was currently unoccupied. The Warming Center team reached out to Community Action of Allegan County who agreed to provide space if First Presbyterian and Good Shepherd would continue providing volunteers and meals.

Even though the church had new members, the Presbytery (body of elders) in Portage refused to allow the church to form a Session, a local governing board. Without a local governing board, First Presbyterian lost its ability to make local decisions.

On numerous occasions, the Presbytery of Lake Michigan stated that they would assist First Presbyterian. That did not happen even though the Presbytery states, "The Presbytery of Lake Michigan is a regional governing body of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that supports and connects congregations across southwest Michigan. We provide leadership development, mission resources, pastoral care, and collaborative ministries to help churches thrive and serve their communities."

No matter how many ways the members asked the Presbytery board why they were making this decision, no explanation came.

When the announcement was made on social media, the response was of disbelief, sadness, and even anger.

A common response came from Kora Lynn Sweet, "Witnessing this happening has been so heartbreaking. The congregation is devastated, and the community is losing a major contributor. This church has done amazing things and the folks there are wonderful. I am sad that I missed their last service this morning."

"Wow, I'm not religious at all, but for this to happen on such short notice is devastating - I feel for those parishioners," shared Jessica Matthes.

Within the church's membership and those working to keep the doors open, the response was heartbreaking.

"I and others were fired at First Presbyterian this past week," lamented David Fooks. "Our outreach programs, our House of The Rising Sun Cafe which helped to double the size of our congregation, were rejected by the ruling Presbytery in Portage. They promised to help us and then 'helpfully' closed our church. This is organized religion at its worst. Many people are hurting, and the sadness is crippling."

Leah Ward was another of those "fired" because of the closing of the church. She can attest to the numb feelings and the need to decompress after the last few months of trying to work with the Presbytery to maintain the church and bring in another parttime minister. But in the end, Ward stated, "There was no nurturing… no help… no session/board. There was only betrayal and lies."

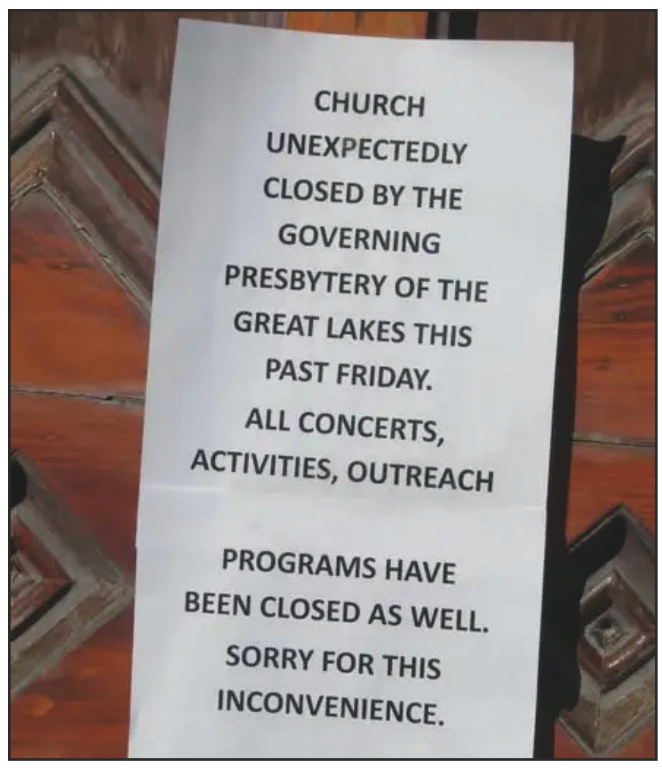
As church members took time to gather their things on Sunday, the mood was solemn. Lifelong members put on a brave face as they acknowledged that this was their family, and they were at a loss. Tears flowed while they attempted to add a silver lining with plans to gather in the near future on a regular basis.

The unhoused person who has been paying rent for a room in the rectory will again be looking for a place to stay. Finding an apartment in Allegan has been extremely difficult for the unhoused who have limited income. By working a couple jobs in town, there is hope that he will be able to afford a place without going back into tent life.

The condolences continue to roll in. Summing it up was Shannon McVoy, "Very sad. The congregation was small, but they were doing some amazing things for and with the community."

"Praying for the congregation," wrote Lori Viening. "So sorry."

The Presbytery of Lake Michigan has been contacted, but there has been not response at this time.



The notice was posted at the First Presbyterian Church on Cutler Street in Allegan. After months of conversations with the Presbytery of Lake Michigan in Portage, and comments from their board members that assistance would be given, the regional governing body told the Allegan congregation that they were closing the church. Sunday, March 1, 2026, was an extremely solemn day as parishioners cleared out personal items and tried to understand why this was happening.

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HOPE history professor Dr. Fred Johnson passes away

By James Windell

When the crowd of people left the Historical Association of South Haven on February 18, 2026, most were, as Jim Ollgaard, President of HASH noted, deep in thought after an inspiring speech by Dr. Fred Johnson. But no one who left his talk thought this would be his last public presentation.

The beloved Hope College History Professor collapsed after suffering a cardiac arrest while teaching in the De Pree Art Center on February 24. He never recovered and passed away just three days later.

Dr. Johnson was well known in South Haven with many remembering his presentation for the South Haven Speakers Series in 2018.

"My memories of Professor Johnson are best captured in a video of him presenting for the Speakers Series of South Haven eight years ago," says Mark Odland, who was President of the South Haven Speakers Series at the time. "This was one of our all-time best attended presentations that proved to stir the audience in a positive manner."

Odland adds that Dr. Johnson had a wonderful way of presenting a difficult topic in a kind and compassionate manner that created opportunities for dialogue. "He was one of a kind and will be missed beyond what words can express," Odland says.

Matthew A. Scogin, President of Hope College, says that Dr. Johnson died peacefully, surrounded by family and close friends who were praying and worshipping God at his bedside. "I was grateful to be there with them," he says.

Scogin described Dr. Johnson as a giant of a man "whose life shaped countless individuals, and his absence will be felt in ways that are hard to put into words."

Dr. Johnson joined the Hope College faculty in 2000 as a professor of history. Scogin says that he was a scholar, a thinker, and an award-winning public speaker, "But his greatest passion was teaching. He loved being in the classroom, and his impact on generations of Hope students runs deep," Scogin says.

Before entering higher education, Fred served in the Marine Corps and later worked at General Motors, Con Tel Page Telecommunications and Aircraft Braking Systems. His life was marked by service, leadership and a profound commitment to helping others flourish.

Dr. Johnson was a member of the Michigan chapter of the National Speakers' Association and a member of Toastmasters since 2004. He advanced to the semifinal round of the Toastmasters World Series of Public Speaking six times between 2007 and 2018.

As a professor, Dr. Johnson's primary field of study was 19th century U.S. history, specifically, the Civil War. His other areas of expertise are 20th century U.S. history, U.S. military history and African history.

He earned his BS degree from Bowie State College, obtained his MA from Kent State University, and his PHD from Kent State University. He also earned a Master of Divinity degree from Western Theological Seminary.

Among his many awards was the Hope Outstanding Professor Educator (H.O.P.E.) Award, which he received in 2005. In 2002 and 2013, he was voted Favorite Faculty/Staff Award by the Hope College student body.

His published books included Tupac Shakur: The Life and Times of an American Icon (2010), Other Men's Wives (2005), and A Man Finds His Way 2003). He was working on three book projects when he died.

President Scogin says that above all Dr.

Johnson's life reflected God's heart. "He strove to follow Jesus Christ in every aspect of his life, he advocated for those often overlooked, and he especially cherished his time teaching in the Muskegon Correctional Facility."

Funeral arrangements were not available at the time the Beacon went to press.

SH Schools hold second vision alignment workshop

By James Windell

South Haven residents and school personnel came together on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at South Haven High School for the second meeting of the Vision Alignment Team.

School Superintendent Ana Aleman-Putman welcomed the participants and turned the meeting over to Michael Posthumus and Sara Melton, the facilitators for the Vision Alignment sessions. Posthumus and Melton are representatives from Fielding International.

Fielding International is a global architecture and education design firm that specializes in creating innovative, learner-centered school environments.

As explained in the first session on February 10, 2026, by Aleman-Putman, the purpose of the workshop sessions are to work on vision alignment for South Haven Public Schools. She explained at the first workshop that the outcome of the sessions will have an impact on the school's programming, resource allocation, and the broader strategic plan. "The district's strategic plan aims to connect decisions and ensure they are designed to support student learning and long-term success, rather than being isolated choices," the Superintendent said.

Also in the initial session, Posthumus and Melton outlined an "ecosystem" approach that starts with vision development, then moves to educational programming, and finally to aligning the learning environment.

To begin the second workshop session, the facilitators asked participants to call out favorite South Haven Schools programs. That resulted in participants calling out sports and athletics, the Robotics Team, the History Club, and the high school band. The facilitators then went on to describe a four-step engagement process: discover/visioning → guiding principles → strategic planning → launch/implementation. The visioning phase, they pointed out, includes three workshop sessions plus building visits and one-on-one conversations to learn what's working and what the district should organize around.

Posthumus and Melton presented a purpose statement that came out of the first session. The purpose of South Haven schools, that was developed based on discussion in the first workshop, was: "To create a sustaining, generative, cooperative, thriving world." Attendees questioned the clarity of the word "generative," noting potential disconnect if shared publicly; alternatives suggested included fostering/facilitating/supporting/creating. Facilitators explained "generative" as creating opportunity, momentum, productivity, and continual growth and evolution.

Discussion also surfaced that "thriving" is aspirational and not a checkbox, but the facilitators suggested that purpose can remain somewhat broad while later work will define success.

Melton tried to clarify the purpose statement by indicating that the exact sentence is not intended as board-adopted public language. Rather, she said, it's meant to create shared understanding to guide the rest of the work. She followed this up by indicating that the group would work on identifying skills that students would need to learn to prepare them for the future.

Although a "RAM mindset" was suggested, this prompted debate. Some participants thought that "RAM mindset" may feel insider-only and not self-explanatory to newcomers to the community. A compromise direction emerged with some suggesting that the concept could serve as an overarching culture/identity label. Others suggested that "RAM mindset" could be changed to "positive culture."

Small groups of participants brainstormed concrete practices and experiences that help students build skills in six areas. Examples of practices generated included volunteering, active listening, group projects, debate/public speaking, writing/reading emails, phone skills, mentoring/cross-age leadership, online safety/media literacy, research/history club work, data analysis/reading comprehension, nature walks, fine arts, science experiments, field trips, and career exploration.

Participants noted the need for adult modeling as well as student practice; culture may extend beyond schools into community organizations. Facilitators introduced a differentiator: moving from students being "dependent learners" (needing adults to prompt behaviors) to independent application of skills. Table discussion connected independence to self-awareness, confidence, authenticity, and knowing when/how to apply skills (and when not to).

Finally, the facilitators introduced a movement activity in which attendees added age-appropriate "independence" practices across a preschooler though high school senior continuum.

Posthumus and Melton ended the evening by indicating they will synthesize all of the groups' outputs into a consolidated picture of practices and developmental progression for skills.

The next workshop session will be on March 24, 2026, at 6:30 pm when participants will be able to review the emerging discovery report and guiding principles.

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VIEWPOINT

Opinion: It's Time to Ban Cell Phones From Classrooms

MIKE'S MUSINGS

MIKE WILCOX ■ PUBLISHER ■

Walk into almost any classroom in America today and you'll see a familiar sight: heads tilted down, thumbs scrolling, students half-present as glowing screens command their attention. Teachers often joke that they're competing with a device designed by some of the world's smartest engineers—except it's not funny anymore. It's a crisis.

Many schools in our area have already addressed this, but many have not. If you are a school in the "have not" category I hope you, for the sake of the students, ban cell phones asap.

Banning cell phones from classrooms isn't about denying technology or being "anti-kids." It's about acknowledging a simple truth: smartphones, in their current form, are wrecking focus, undermining learning, and damaging the social fabric schools are meant to cultivate.

First, the academic costs are undeniable. Study after study has shown that even the mere presence of a cell phone—buzzing, glowing, or sitting silently on a desk—reduces attention and recall. Teens aren't just distracted by their phones; they're distracted thinking about their phones. No amount of teacher reminders, "phone caddies," or half-hearted "airplane mode" rules are strong enough to compete with apps engineered to keep users hooked.

Then there's the social and emotional fallout. Classrooms used to be places where students talked to each other, made eye contact, formed friendships, and learned to navigate conflict. Now, many walk into class and immediately retreat into their screens. Instead of conversation, they exchange TikToks. Instead of solving problems face-to-face, they text from across the room. And when conflicts do arise, they often spill over into the digital world, where rumors, screenshots, and online drama spread exponentially faster.

Teachers—already stretched thin—are expected to police this chaos, but the burden is impossible. They can't teach effectively while also monitoring Snapchat, Instagram, and a dozen other distractions pinging in 30 pockets. Classroom management collapses when technology is allowed to call the shots.

Some argue that students need phones for safety, especially in an era of lockdown drills and real threats. But let's be honest: during emergencies, trained adults need clear communication—not hundreds of teenagers live-streaming, texting parents, or spreading misinformation. Most school districts have landlines, radios, and emergency systems for a reason. Phones often complicate crises, not solve them.

Others say banning cell phones is unrealistic or outdated. Yet countries like France, the U.K., and others have already enacted national restrictions with strong results: improved academic performance, fewer behavioral issues, and better student well-being. It turns out that when kids don't have the option to disengage, they re-engage.

This doesn't mean technology should be stripped from education. Chromebooks, tablets, and controlled digital learning tools can enhance instruction when used intentionally. But smartphones—personal, addictive, and impossible to regulate—are a different category entirely. They're not tools of learning; they're portals to distraction.

A classroom should be a place for thinking, not scrolling. For discussion, not notifications. For learning, not multitasking. If we want students to succeed—academically, socially, and emotionally—then banning cell phones in classrooms isn't just reasonable. It's urgent.

Sometimes the simplest solutions are the most effective. Shut the phones off. Put them away. Give students the freedom to actually learn.

Driver with multiple outstanding warrants jailed

Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Uniform Response handled a motorist assist in Decatur Township. The driver was identified and had multiple outstanding warrants. The vehicle came back as stolen out of Cass County. Methamphetamine was found during the investigation as well as other items in question. The driver was lodged on several felonies.

Uniform Response handled a single motor vehicle crash in Columbia Township. Upon investigation, the driver was found to be intoxicated. He was lodged for the incident.

"I want to thank Michigan's Speaker of the House of Representatives Matt Hall for the special guest invite to attend the State of the State event. I was able to speak with numerous representatives about different topics and interests that would benefit not only our office, but also our community," said Van Buren County Sheriff Daniel Abbott.

"Congratulations to Bailey Kissel for completing and graduating from the Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) Corrections Academy this week. Part of the requirement through the state to work in the corrections division is to complete the mandatory 160-hour corrections academy within a year of being hired," said Sheriff Abbott.

"There is a scam going on that appears to be from Amazon. The message claims that an item you bought was of poor quality or has been recalled. It also states Amazon will provide you with a full refund and free replacement with a link for you to click on. The link will take you to a fake page that looks real and cybercriminals will steal your credentials at that point. Reminder not to select any links in an unexpected text message. If you believe there's an issue with your Amazon purchase, navigate through their official website. Lastly, as always if it's too good to be true, it probably is," said Sheriff Abbott.

"Uniform Response went through a six-hour training session for the use of the new Taser 7 Energy Weapons. The training consists of review of Axons training materials which include a PowerPoint presentation, various tabletop and line drills, and different scenario training meant to emulate real world situations where deputies may be tasked with deploying an energy weapon at a suspect. Deputies have all had taser training in the past, but with the new Taser 7, this training was required," said Sheriff Abbott.

Uniform Response handled a scam in Almena Township. The victim was at work, and a secretary received a phone call from an individual saying they were law enforcement. "The victim got on the phone and was advised he missed court and there was a warrant placed on him with a $3,700 bond. The victim left work, drew the money out, and fortunately felt something didn't seem right about it. He stopped at our office, and it was confirmed to be a scam. It's an open investigation and we are hoping to identify the suspect in this so they can be held accountable. I'd like to remind everyone that we would not call you on something like this, and if there's ever a question on anything like this, call law enforcement immediately to confirm it's valid. This victim was close to being scammed out of his money," said Sheriff Abbott.

Uniform Response handled a vehicle stuck on the railroad tracks in Bangor. Deputies once on scene found the driver was highly intoxicated. The vehicle was removed off the tracks, and the incident was investigated further. The driver was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and possession of cocaine.

Uniform Response handled a call in which a four-year-old child consumed edible chocolate covered mushrooms in Waverly Township. "The child got into the refrigerator where the parent had them and ate some. The child was taken to the ER for treatment," said Sheriff Abbott. The case is being reviewed by the Van Buren County Prosecutor's Office for charges and it was sent to CPS (Child Protective Services) as well.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Disservice done by printing Young's letter

To Whom It May Concern:

I question the purpose of allowing a 6 column diatribe filled with insults, personal opinion, and a general "senior crankiness" over…. Well, I'm not actually sure what John Young is railing about exactly.

But I will tell you this: And these are direct quotes as printed in your publication.

"Spoiled brats" hockey team

"Turncoats looking for 15 minutes of fame"

Olympians "owe a debt" to the nation? "Athletes exist simply for our entertainment? No more than dancing bears or rodeo clowns"

"Corrupt Gov. Whitmer"

'MARITAL NAME CHANGES SHOULD BE MANAGED BUT "PEOPLE OF COLOR AND WOMEN ARE TOO STUPID TO FIGURE IT OUT"

REALLY? YOU PRINTED THIS?

DO YOU NEED WRITERS TO FILL SPACE, OR IS IT EASIER TO GIVE 6 COLUMNS TO AN OBVIOUSLY MALICIOUS HATEMONGER?

So, IN THE SPIRIT OF THE IGNORANCE THAT MR. YOUNG PROUDLY DISPLAYS WHEN HE SAYS 'PEOPLE OF COLOR AND WOMEN ARE TOO STUPID TO FIGURE IT OUT" If I may, let me advise you of a few things women go through with "legal" names. When my husband decided he just couldn't be married, he divorced me. I had taken his name 3 years earlier as most women seem to do. But now that he's divorcing me, I MUST PETITION THE COURT FOR THE RIGHT TO RESUME THE USE OF MY BIRTH NAME. WE HAD NO CHILDREN; JUST HE AND I, yet I had to ask for my name back legally. I get it. But then…..

But I could not legally get my drivers license, voters registration, insurance, medical, IRS information, payroll, Human Resources, library card or any other "legal" documents I am required to have unless I drag along that divorce decree to every facility to prove I was back to using my birth name.

Worked great for 10 years.

Then I got married again. And now, 40 years later and using and considering my legal name to be my husband's last name, along comes the SAVE act. But no men have to jump through more hoops to have the "required ID" OF YOUR BIRTH CERTIFICATE.

Well, Mr. Wilcox, VICE PRESIDENT VANCE'S BIRTH NAME IS JOHN DONALD BOWMAN.

Well, Mr. Wilcox, VICE PRESIDENT VANCE'S MILITARY SERVICE IS. UNDER HIS ADOPTED NAME OF JOHN DAVID HAMEL.

Well, Mr. Wilcox, VICE PRESIDENT VANCE LEGALLY CHANGED HIS OWN NAME TO JD VANCE IN 2013. RIGHT AFTER PETER THIEL CHOSE HIM TO SPONSOR INTO THE WHITE HOUSE.

So, no, life is not fair. If anything, it's pretty plainly set Up for the convenience and ease of men. And, as Mr. Young asserts, 'People of color" (I think he'd like to use another word) and "Women" are 'TOO STUPID TO FIGURE OUT MARITAL NAME CHANGES."

I wasn't too stupid, Mr. Young. I just never had the men's rules apply to me.

Hope this helps explain just why I think you do a disservice to your business, to simply publicize an article that is so obviously racist and misogynistic. And then you claim we should all sit down and talk.

Why not make your next column about how to talk to anyone who starts by calling you names? Better yet, why not own the distinction of being the first political party to put the "F WORD" on a flag? Because now that formerly frowned-upon word is just an everyday adjective without the power to shock anymore.

Here. Let me help you.

Sincerely,
A libtard.
A retard.
A woman.
Mary Redmon

The rest of the story

Dear Editor:

On February 12, 2026, I read Publisher Wilcoxs ("Wilcox") article titled "Why the U.S. Needs Voter I.D." On or about February 4, 2026, President Trump ("Trump") stated that Republicans should nationalize elections. On February 11, 2026, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the SAVE America Act. Wilcox supports Trump and the Republican House of Representatives. He wrote "National elections should have national standards. So, why does the U.S. need Voter ID? To further safeguard and protect the election process. But, is there a bona fide problem with election fraud?

No. As Wilcox knows, "instances of in person fraud are statistically rare." He writes further that "... fraud is infrequent." I would use the words "nearly non-existent." So, we're trying to fix a nearly non-existent problem. Why? Wilcox admits that there is chance that voting may be suppressed. And, folks, that is the real goal of Trump and Republicans. a The SAVE America Act raises concerns among some groups, including married individuals who have changed their names and may not have matching documents.

Democrats say this legislation would disenfranchise eligible voters, while Republicans say it is necessary to prevent fraud. (But, here again, as Wilcox notes fraud is rare. It is a bogeyman.) Wilcox wrote that the notion that Voter ID laws suppress turnout "doesn't hold up against real world experience." However, Wisconsin's Voter ID law suppressed turnout among African American voters and other groups in 2016. Where turnout in elections increased, there is no evidence that it increased because of Voter ID laws Trump hired Simpatico Software Systems ("Simpatico") to attempt to prove voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election. Simpatico found no (repeat, no) evidence that any voter fraud changed the election.

Claims of voter fraud made by others were verified as false. Trump and his allies feed us a steady diet of innuendo, misrepresentations, false impressions, and outright lies when it comes to the issue of voter fraud. If voter fraud had impacted the 2020 presidential election, it would already have been proven. Trump is lying about election fraud. Trump lost the 2020 election. So, if FOX News continues to spread voter fraud lies, and many of its viewers actually believe the lies, the U.S. needs to add further steps and barriers to vote and more than likely have ICE agents around our polling stations? We have become Hungary.

In the Dominion Voting Systems ("Dominion") v FOX News 2023 lawsuit, FOX News was alleged to have knowingly spread false election fraud stories. The core of FOX News' defense was the notion that its viewers know that FOX News is not hard news reporting. While not explicitly using the word "entertainment", it was implied. FOX News paid Dominion $787.5 million in April 2023.

Here we are in February 2026. Trump is still lying about voter fraud. And, Wilcox wants "national standards" to prevent near non-existent voter fraud. Wilcox added that there is a "fairness" element. Though admittedly "statistically rare" and "infrequent", there is this belief of fraudulent voting and "gaming" the system. Inasmuch as this belief is Evidence Free, is it too much to expect journalists to point this out, rather than to inflame it?

If you wish to indulge in a "fairness" discussion, start with the Electoral College. A condidate can win an election in Michigan by one vote and receive all 15 electoral votes. Winner Takes All. Fair? In 2016, Trump lost the popular vote by almost 3 million votes and still became President. Fair?

And then there is the U.S. Senate. Wyoming has 588,753 people. New York has 20.2 million people. Each state has 2 Senators. Fáir?

Wilcox claims a desire to leave no eligible voter behind. Let's see. Who's most at risk of being denied at the polls? Service members, people of color, naturalized citizens, women and rural voters If Republicans truly cared about election integrity, election day would be a national holiday or held on Sundays. Republicans want nothing to do with this idea. The more people voting, the worse Republicans tend to get beaten. Since the 1970's, it has been pretty cut and dry, figure out who is likely to vote against them, and prevent them from voting.

Sen. Mitch McConnell opposed making election day a national holiday for these very reasons.

Sorry, arguments against the latest Voter ID requirements, when reviewed critically, are anything but weak. Arguments to eliminate the Electoral College and make election day a national holiday arere strong. These are worthy tasks for Congress.

W. DeHoek

So many words and nothing said

Dear Editor:

This is in response to John R. Young's exhaustive Letter to the Editor on Feb. 26.

Mr. Young you must remember the old adage, "One man's disparagement is another woman's praise."

While you expended more than 1,000 words from your keyboard and said very little of substance that would convince me otherwise, I believe it's time you give it a rest and let the trees grow to maturity.

Isn't it great, Mr. Young, that we live in a country where you, I, and those honored Olympians can express ourselves 'FREELY!' My only hope is that those same young people will be allowed to grow to maturity with these same First Amendment Rights.

Let me remind you and anyone reading this rebuttal that Freedom of Speech in America is the fundamental, constitutional right to express opinions and ideas without government retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction, extending to spoken, written, and symbolic actions.

There less than 175 words, Mr. Young. It is possible to make a point without killing a tree!

Ann Burch

Reader agrees constitution for moral, religious people

Dear Editor:

According to John R.Young, in the February edition of the Courier -Leader, in 1798 while addressing the Massachusetts Militia, John Adams stated," Our Constitution was made only for moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other".

Mr. Young, I could not agree with you more. Our Constitution then excludes persons found guilty by a jury of 34 felonies, persons who spread racist tropes, persons who profit from their high position by selling shoes-bitcoins-financial tokens-Bibles-fragrences-beer koozies-red caps-watches-real estate, a person accused of pedophila, persons who consistently lie, convicted rapists, and persons unfaithful to their marriage partner.

I am certainly glad our Constitution excludes people like this. Mr Young, I could not agree with you more. I am delighted we have no one in our government like that. May God bless America.

Yours in Patriotism,
Rick Wild
Lawrence Township

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OBITUARY

Thomas William "Bill" Stembaugh

Thomas William "Bill" Stembaugh, 94, passed away peacefully on Feb. 20, 2026. He was born on Jan. 22, 1932, in Lawrence, Michigan, the only child of the late Thomas and Daisy (Taylor) Stembaugh.

After high school, Bill went on to serve his country in the United States Navy as a radio operator. After completing his bachelor's degree, life brought him back to Lawrence, where he ran the lumber company for his mother. He then secured his first insurance adjuster position and advanced to obtain his CPCU designation. He eventually became a founding partner at Michigan Claim Service, where he remained until his retirement. His work took him and his family to several communities throughout Michigan over the years.

Family was at the heart of Bill's life. On Feb. 22, 1952, he married Doris (Rowley) Stembaugh, who passed on Oct. 15, 2022. Together, they built a life centered on love, family, and faith.

Bill enjoyed a full and active life, which included much travel, with winters in Florida and summers on the lake. He enjoyed swimming, golf, walking, reading, and never passed up a good card game. He valued time with friends and remained actively engaged with others in his later years at the White Oaks community in Lawton, Michigan.

A man of strong faith, Bill was a dedicated supporter of the United Methodist Church and gave his time in service, including helping to form Eleanor's Pantry in Paw Paw. His steady presence and commitment to both family and community will be deeply missed.

He is survived by four children, Janeen (Patrick) Barr of Bangor, Nadine (David) Aldrich of Paw Paw, Richard Stembaugh of Bangor, and Doreen (Richard) Petersen of Grand Haven, Michigan; along with many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, extended family members, and dear friends.

A memorial service to honor and celebrate Bill's life was held on Saturday, Feb. 28, at the Paw Paw United Methodist Church, 420 West Michigan Ave., Paw Paw.

Memorial contributions may be given to United Christian Services, Paw Paw Annex Suite #1, 600 E. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079, or c/o the funeral home.

Friends and family may share a condolence message online at www.jolders-ma-klein.com.

Morris, economic development leader, joins Sturgis Bank

Sturgis Bank announced on Tuesday, March 3 that Zach Morris has joined the bank as assistant vice president, business development for Van Buren County. He has over 20 years' experience helping businesses in Michigan grow and thrive. Morris most recently served as executive director of Market One, which has principal responsibilities for economic and community development throughout Van Buren and Cass counties. Under his leadership the organization had an economic impact of $2.26 million and helped businesses create 1,300 jobs.

Stephanie Timmer, Senior Vice President, Community President for Van Buren County, said, "We are thrilled that Zach has joined the Sturgis Bank team. We've been serving clients in Van Buren County for over 25 years and continue to grow throughout the region. Zach will be instrumental in continuing our expansion."

"I'm excited for this opportunity," said Zach. "In my previous role, I worked closely with the team at Sturgis Bank and witnessed firsthand the expertise, integrity, and dedication they demonstrate in serving their clients each day. Joining the team feels like a natural progression, aligning my experience with a bank that is firmly committed to strengthening the communities it serves."

Morris holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Professional Studies from Davenport University and is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute (OUEDI). He earned his Certified Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP) credential through Grow America.

An active volunteer, Morris currently serves as treasurer of the Michigan Economic Development Association, chairman of the Community Board of Directors for Beacon Dowagiac Hospital and is a board member of the County Brownfield and Land Bank Authorities.

COMM UNITY

PPPS Senior Citizens Luncheons

At Paw Paw Public Schools, we are committed to fostering connections among our schools and the community to increase authentic opportunities for students and improve civic engagement.

All Paw Paw area seniors citizens aged 60 and older are invited to attend and learn about the great things happening in the schools!

There is a suggested $6 donation, but participation is open to all seniors regardless of ability to donate.

Paw Paw High School Cafeteria
30609 Red Arrow Hwy.

All luncheons begin at 1:30 p.m., and doors open at 1:15 p.m.

Mar. 13, 2026 — Corned Beef & Cabbage, Roasted Potatoes with Carrots, Biscuit & Cookies

Apr. 10, 2026 — Alfredo Pasta with Chicken, Garlic Bread, Broccoli, Carrots with Cauliflower & Chocolate Cream Pie

May 8, 2026 — Fried Chicken, Baked Beans, Potato Salad & Apple Pie

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420 W. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079
269-657-7727
Pastor Dan Phillips
Sunday Service at 9:30 am

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RED ARROW MINISTRIES
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Rev. G. Ben Bowater, IV
Founding Pastor
SUNDAY Worship - 9:30 a.m. & 11 a.m.
www.redarrowministries.org for live stream worship

• • • •

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
412 Cedar Street
Handicap Accessible
657-3762 • www.stmarkpaw-paw.com
e-mail: stmarkspawpaw@gmail.com
SUNDAY Worship 9:30 a.m.

• • • •

ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
500 Paw Paw Street
Fr. Dave Pinto
657-4459
Weekday:
Monday – no Mass
Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday: 8:00 AM
Wednesday Mass – 9:00 AM
Saturday – 4:00 PM
Sunday – 11:00 AM

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TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL
721 Pine Street
Pastor Phillip Phifer
Church: 657-4840
School: 657-5921
Sunday Services 9 a.m. & 11 a.m.

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TRUTH CHURCH
32560 56th Ave. • 657-5042
www.truthchurchpawpaw.com
Pastor Steven Green
SUNDAY
School - 10 a.m.
Evening Service - 6 p.m.
THURSDAY Bible Study - 7 p.m.

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IGLESIA DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO/ CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
30037 E Red Arrow Hwy.,
Pastors Maggie & Jay Salas
Domingo/Sunday:
Adoración | Worship- 10 a.m.
Jueves/Thursday: Oracion/ Estudió Bíblico | Prayer/Bible Study- 7 p.m.
(269) 377-6514
(269) 993-6727

LAWRENCE

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Corner of Exchange & James Street • 674-8381
Pastor Doug Tipken
SUNDAY Worship - 11 a.m.
lawrencemethodist-church.org for information of online videos

GOBLES

NORTHPOINT MINISTRIES OF GOBLES
04077 M40
269-628-9199
northpointgobles@gmail.com
Pastors: Gary Lounsberry & John Losen Jr.
Sunday: 11am - Morning Worship
Monday: 7 pm - REFRESH Bible Study
Wednesday: 7pm - Prayer Meeting

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ST JUDE' MISSION PARISH
13809 M-40
269-628-2219
Thursday – 10:00 AM
Sunday – 9:00 AM

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GOBLES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
210 E. Exchange St., Gobles
(269) 628-2263
Pastor Sheila F. Baker
Sunday: 9:30 a.m. Worship
Children's Sunday School
Website: goblesumc.com
Facebook.com/goblesumc

MARCELLUS

ST. MARGARET MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH
296 E. Dibble St.
Rev. John Tran.
668-3312
Sunday - 9:45AM
p.m.

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HARMONY CHAPEL
88067 C.R. 652 (In the SW corner of Porter Twp.)
Rev. Ron Packer
269-548-7348
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DECATUR BIBLE CHURCH
80797 M-51, Decatur
(269) 423-5111
Pastor Steven Pace
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Worship 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study & Prayer 5:00 p.m.
facebook.com/DecaturBibleChurch • http://www.decaturbible.org

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DECATUR NEW HOPE COMMUNITY CHURCH
319 ½ West Delaware Street
Pastor Ross Tarantino
SUNDAY
Worship Service-10:00 a.m.
TUESDAY
Bible Study-1:00 p.m.
269-423-8136
info@decaturnewhopecommunity.net

LAWTON

DAILY HARVEST MINISTRIES
117 S.Franklin Street
Pastor Jack Shanley
SUNDAY Worship - 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
WEDNESDAY
Bible Study - 6 p.m.

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IGLESIA PENTECOSTES
Eel Movimiento misionero Mundial, Inc.
Bilingual
117 S. Franklin Street
Pastors Arturo & Lourdez Hernandez
(616) 656-0137
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Martes y Jueves - 7:30 p.m.
Local: (269) 655-8071

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502 N. Main Street, Lawton, MI 49065
Pastor Adam Potgiesser
Sunday Worship 10am
www.nc2online.com • facebook.com/nc2online
(269) 299-2003

• • • •

ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
624-1050
Pastor Ashlei Horn
SUNDAY Worship - 10:00 a.m.
www.stpoulsumclawton.com or on Facebook www.Facebook.com/Lawton-St-Pauls-UMC

MATTAWAN

CALVARY COMMUNITY CHURCH
7829 S. 5th St
Pastor Gregory VanHeukelom
375-6240
www.calvaryreformed.org
Website: https://www.calvary-community.church/
Worship still 10 am Sunday with live Facebook
Jody's Closet, a free clothing ministry is open Mon/Tue 10am-12 and Thur 6-7:30pm
And the 1st Saturday of the month 8:30-10am.

• • • •

FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH
56070 Murray Street
Pastor Chuck Rawsthorne
SUNDAY
School - 9:30 a.m.
Morning Service - 10:30 a.m.
(In person and on Facebook)

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MATTAWAN COMMUNITY CHURCH
23680 Front Ave.
668-3263
www.mattawancc.com
mattawancommunitychurch@gmail.com
Pastor Eric Baird
Sundays at 10:25 a.m

• • • •

ST. JOHN BOSCO CATHOLIC CHURCH
23830 Front Ave.
Rev. John Tran
668-3312
www.stjbparish.com
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Lady Rams enter districts, 10-0 in conference

Madi Duda plays keep-away from her Berrien Springs defender.

Ly'Nique Cunningham drives through defensive pressure.

JaNiyah Langston keeps her concentration on the basket while driving past defender

By Tom Renner

South Haven High School basketball had an incredible season; both the boys' and girls' teams won conference championships. Each team was undefeated (10-0) in the Lakeshore division of the Southwest Athletic Conference.

The Lady Rams concluded their regular season with a 55-53 home win over Berrien Springs. The team enters the District tournament at Hamilton this week with a 13-9 season record.

The Rams lost to Holland Christian, 64-55, in the District tournament championship game. The team's final 18-2 record was among the best in school history.

SH bowlers finish 12th in state championships

Pictured left to right are Jacob Bosma, Rylan Jenks, Jadon Schneider, Coach Gary Guthrie, Brody Strebeck, Ryan Odell, Carson Brown and Noah Maly.

By Tom Renner

The South Haven High School boys bowling team concluded a successful season by participating in the Division 3 state championships this past weekend in Jackson.

As a team, the Rams finished 12th in a field of 16 teams. The team qualified for the state finals for the first time after finishing second in the Regional.

Junior Ryan Odell also competed in the individual competition, finishing 22nd in a field of 56 bowlers with an average of 195 over six games.

Paw Paw basketball boys are district champs

By John Raffel
Correspondent

PAW PAW — Paw Paw was 2-0 at the boys basketball district last week to make it a 17-7 record

Paw Paw beat Otsego 71-40 and Parchment 63-33 in the title are and was dated to play March 3 against Hudsonville Unity Christian in the regional semifinals.

Paw Paw has won three straight games and will face a UC team that's 21-3.

The regional title game is Thursday,

The girls season ends at 6-17 on March 2 for Paw Paw with a 52-49 loss to Vicksburg.

Paw Paw lost to Sturgis 71-38 last week to end the regular season.

Gobles wrestlers

Colton Collingsworth and Finn Carlin passed 10 wins for Gobles wrestling this season.

Bangor wins district game

By John Raffel
Corespondent

Bangor's girls basketball team enjoyed its first district victory since the 2018 season with a 46-18 win over Bloomingdale's on Monday.

Bangor has an 11-12 record and will play in the district semifinals on Wednesday.

Madison Lennox had 14 points, Izzy Horvath had eight points, Lexi Wiesnewski and Cielo Maldonado seven points and Taylor Garner six.

Belle Macado had eight rebounds, Horvath and Cielo Maddando had seven rebounds apiece and Lexi Wieniewski had eight steals. Taylor Gardner had three steals.

Wiesnewski had four assists, Madison Lennox and Belle Macedo had two and Taylor Gardner also had two.

Bangor will play Watervliet at Watervliet on March 4 in a district semifinals game.

Mattawan girls win district game

By John Raffel
Correspondent

MATTAWAN — No. 4 seed Mattawan hosted No. 5 Portage Northern in opening round girls district play and came out on top 50-28. Mattawan jumped out to an early 17-2 lead after the first quarter behind seven points from Charlotte Douglass and 4 from Annemarie Pelak.

Mattawan continued a strong first half by outscoring PN 13-6 in the second quarter to lead 30-8 at the half. Caitlin Ryan had five first half points to support Charlotte Douglass who had 11 points in the half.

Maliyah Flowers had eight 3rd quarter points, but PN trailed 39-16 at the start of the fourth.

Charlotte Douglass of Mattawan ended with 19 points. Caitlin Ryan had 7 points

Maliyah Flowers of Portage ended with 15 points.

Mattawan moves on to play No. 1 Kalamazoo Central at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday at Portage Central. The two teams split 2 regular season meetings, KC won at Mattawan 44-41 and Mattawan won at KC 50-40.

Mattawan celebrated four seniors (Savannah Waterlander - 2 points, Taylor Bernardi 1 point, Larkin Baima 4 points, and Chloe Nellenbach 6 points) with a 43-19 win last Thursday over Lakeshore.

Mattawan led 23-7 at the half behind 10 first half points from Charlotte Douglass and 8 2nd quarter points from Caitlin Ryan, both players ended the night with 14 points.

Lakeshore was paced by Samanthat Little with 10 points.

Mattawan struggled shooting the ball and fell on the road at Harper Creek by nine Tuesday night 44-35.

Caitlin Ryan led all scorers with 15 points and 6 steals. Savannah Waterlander had 8 points and 5 rebounds.

Lawrence boys are district champions

By John Raffel
Correspondent

LAWRENCE — Lawrence boys basketball came off a season where they saw a lot of growth and a season where they got better and better throughout the year coach Noah Wiswary said.

That showed it as they headed into district play, on Wednesday and were able to knock off Martin 65-50 that advanced them into the District Final game against Benton Harbor Countryside Academy. Defense was the key component for the Tigers as they were able to hold Countryside to 23 points through the first 3 quarters.

There were big games from Alex Gardner who had 12 points 12 rebounds and 10 blocks, Xavier Glover who had 19 points and 5 assists, and Gabe Doorlag who had 16 points and 9 rebounds.

"These kids have started to become a player led team, it is really fun to watch and I can't think of a group that deserves this more than them," Wiswary said.

Lawrence won 55-42 over Countryside in the title game.

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Ice-Out Perch

We were on the southwest corner of Muskegon Lake in late March. The waves kept the boat rocking, and the anchor held us fairly tight. The wind was blowing hard from the northeast, and the perch were proving to be challenging.

With the constant battering of the wind, the boat would slide forward a few inches with each wave. This resulted in us pulling anchor and resetting every twenty minutes or so.

Until the anchor got stuck. It was wedged in the rocks in twenty-five feet of water. Se pulled and groaned, but it would not budge. We started the motor and tried to pull it free, but that failed. All we got was soaked for our efforts.

Finally, I said to my friend Denny, "I will start the motor; you cut the anchor rope." Of course, nothing goes to plan. The old two-cycle motor sputtered as soon as I put it into gear. That quickly, and we were on a straight course for the rocky rip-rap shoreline.

I jumped into the lake holding the side of the boat. Denny fired up the motor, and once my feet felt the rocks, I pushed us outward and told Denny to put it in gear. I said drag me out to deep water and help me back into the boat. That part worked, and we called it an evening and headed to the dock. His son asked, "Is this a regular part of our trips?"

Over decades of on-again, off-again perch-fishing excursions, things happen. Sometimes the results are a bucket full of perch, and other days not so much.

March kicks off ice-out perch fishing. At one point in history, perch were plentiful. Half a limit could be counted on each day out, with more days than not having a limit. But some things changed, and not always for the better.

Perch fishing is low-tech, simple, and a good way to catch fish early in the year. It's also a fish that requires patience. Lake Mac is a prime example. You can fish a spot and not get a bite in an hour, leave, try another spot with the same results, and go back to the first spot and catch a limit. The next day, maybe not a fish to be found.

I fished Grand Haven a few times with decent success, but it was not a daily occurrence. Spring Lake off the Grand River is a better bet. Silver Lake off the Kalamazoo offers steady action, but access will depend on water depth. Low water levels on Lake Michigan will make access tough.

Gun Lake is worth the time and effort. Once you figure out the pattern, it's a steady producer. Time on the water is paramount, and we like the shallower waters. Think of canals, channels, inlets, and areas with decayed vegetation and warm water.

Muskegon and White Lake are worth the drives. Both produce perch during the winter and at ice-out. Two areas produce the best. Areas close to the channel and the piers or areas near the mouth of connecting lakes, streams, culverts, and inlets. Giving the exact spots is like giving out your mushroom locations. However, if you see a pack of boats, go there!

'I still enjoy fishing the 60-80 foot clay humps out of South Haven. You need a calm day or a day with an east wind. And you need patience and a milk run of spots.

We were limited out on one Saturday morning, about the same time the fog rolled in. I was glad that my partner had a compass. After that incident, a compass stays in the boat.

Perch Pounder rigs and perch flies fished on a tandem rig land plenty of perch. We also like the glow-in-the-dark teardrops. Some guys swear that a plain gold hook with a minnow is the best. Carry all of the mentioned items along with spikes and wax worms.

There are days when the perch are extremely picky. Also, carry enough sinkers so that your rig doesn't roll all over. We use bright colored braid line so we can see the bite or any movement. Stop in and visit Bob's Gun and Tackle Shop.

A mess of early season perch

Jack Payne

Payne is a member of OWAA (outdoor writers association of America). He is an avid outdoorsperson who enjoys fishing, hunting, hiking and cooking. This column will hopefully enhance your outdoor experiences. "While I may have some knowledge, I am very fortunate that I do know many true experts that share their knowledge with me," said Payne. "Together, hopefully we all can learn and experience more fun in the great outdoors." Payne resides in southwest Michigan. His column will appear weekly in the Courier Leader/Flashes.

Almena Church to hold Soup and Salad Supper

The Almena United Methodist Church, 27503 County Road 375, Paw Paw, will hold a Soup and Salad Super, Saturday, March 7, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

A variety of soups, salads, bread and desserts will be available.

A free will offering will be accepted.

Southwest Michigan School Spirit Tournament returns

If there's one thing Southwest Michigan has more of than anywhere else, it's school spirit. And for the third straight year, State Rep. Pauline Wendzel is giving local schools the chance to prove who has the most.

The 2026 Southwest Michigan School Spirit Tournament is back, and this year the stakes are bigger than ever. The winning school will take home a trophy, a tribute, and a $1,500 donation from Rep. Wendzel to the school's program or department of choice.

"Last year we had communities going to war over this thing. I mean that in the best way possible," Rep. Wendzel said. "This tournament brings out a level of pride that you just don't see anywhere else."

The tournament is a March Madness-style bracket that kicks off on Wednesday, March 18, and runs through mid-April, with the 2026 champion crowned on Friday, April 17.

The tournament takes place on Rep. Wendzel's Facebook page (@RepPW).

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March 19, 2026
TIME, TALENT, TREASURE
Come explore our Volunteer Fair, showcasing many nonprofits around Allegan County at The Silo in Allegan from 12-2pm.
Donate to your favorite nonprofit fund at ACCF on March 19th and have your gift DOUBLED! All donations up to a total of $61,000 will be matched.
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=• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

ALMENA TOWNSHIP
SYNOPSIS
JANUARY 21, 2026

Almena Township Board meeting was held January 21, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

Attendance: John Wagner, Kelly Redmond, Mark Roman, Sandra Rickli, Joe Leduc.

Absent Tim Kloosterman, Scott Rueff (excused)

a. Motion passed to approve amended agenda
b. Motion passed to approve meeting minutes of December 17, 2026
c. Disbursements approved in the amount of $154,018.47
d. d. Sheriff's Department report
e. e. Mattawan Fire Department report
f. Public comment offered
g. Reports by officers presented
h. Motion to appoint Kyle Hohler as chair of energy committee
i. Motion to approve Ordinance 2026-01 addressing flood-plain management
j. Motion to support Rickli family purchase of development rights application for farmland preservation
k. Motion to reappoint John Wagner to the Planning Commission for a three-year term
l. Public comment offered
m. Meeting adjourned 7:06pm

Sandra Rickli, Clerk, Almena Township

State of Michigan
Probate Court
Van Buren County
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S ESTATE
Case No. 2025-1196-DE
Judge Susan Metzger
Court Address 212 E. Paw Paw St., Suite 220 Paw Paw, MI 49079
Court Phone: 269-657-8225
Estate of JANICE KAY ZAMOJSKI
Date of Birth: August 3, 1952
TO ALL CREDITORS:
NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Janice Kay Zamojski, died November 22, 2025 (11/22/2025).
Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Laura Labonte, personal representative, or both the probate court at 212 E. Paw Paw Street Suite 220 Paw Paw, MI 49079 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice
2/25/2026

Attorney:
Thav, Ryke & Langan
Lennifer A. Fracassi #P45651
24725 W. 12 Mile Rd., Ste 110
Southfield, MI 48034
248-945-1111

Personal representative:
Laura Labonte
759 Woodlea Dr.
Ostego, MI 49078
269-685-7161

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: M Brian Knotek; Atty: Plunkett & Cooney - Lisa A. Hall; 1st Pub: 3/5/2026; Atty File #: (N/A); Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County in Paw Paw, Michigan starting promptly at 1:00 p.m. on April 23, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Mortgage (the "Mortgage") made by M Brian Knotek and Kristen H. Knotek, husband and wife, as Mortgagor to Old National Bank, a national association, as Mortgagee, dated September 10, 2014, and recorded September 29, 2014, Liber 1609, Page 121, in Van Buren County Records, Van Buren County, Michigan. The balance owing on the Mortgage is $65,269.01 at the time of this Notice. The Mortgage contains a power of sale and no suit or proceeding at law or in equity has been instituted to recover the debt secured by the Mortgage, or any part of the Mortgage. The Mortgagee will apply the sale proceeds to the debt secured by the Mortgage as stated above, plus interest on the amount due at the rate of 4.25% per annum; all legal costs and expenses, including attorney fees allowed by law; and also any amount paid by the Mortgagee to protect its interest in the property. The property to be sold at foreclosure is all of that real estate situated in the Township of Almena, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan, described as: Lot 39, Thousand Oaks No. 3, according to the recorded plat thereof, as recorded in Liber 8 of Plats on Page 22. Parcel ID: 80-01-552-039-00 Commonly known address: 24271 Thousand Oaks Dr., Mattawan, MI 49071 The redemption period shall be six-months from the date of sale pursuant to MCLA 600.3240(8), unless deemed abandoned and then pursuant to the time frames provided for in MCL 600.3241a. Pursuant to MCL 600.3278, Mortgagor will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Dated: February 27, 2026 Old National Bank, N.A., Mortgagee
PLUNKETT COONEY LISA A. HALL Attorney for Mortgagee
333 Bridge Street NW, Suite 530 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504 (616) 752-4615

(03-05)(04-02)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: John Samuel-James Deerwester; Atty: Team X; 1st Pub: 2/26/2026; Atty File #: 528314F01; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on March 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): John Samuel-James Deerwester, a single person
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): NewRez LLC D/B/A Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing
Date of Mortgage: May 20, 2021
Date of Mortgage Recording: May 25, 2021
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $98,650.25
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Pine Grove, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: Lot 13, Barber's LakeView Heights, according to the recorded plat thereof, as recorded in Liber 5 of Plats, Page 5, Van Buren County Records.
Common street address (if any): 31337 Baseline Rd, Gobles, MI 49055-9082
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: February 26, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1585341

(02-26)(03-19)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Margaret Brown; Atty: Team J; 1st Pub: 2/26/2026; Atty File #: 528126F01; Insurer: FNMA
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on April 2, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Margaret Amanda Brown, an unmarried woman
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Onslow Bay Financial LLC
Date of Mortgage: June 14, 2024
Date of Mortgage Recording: July 5, 2024
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $217,767.89
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Porter, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: The West 14 acres of the Southwest fractional 1/4 of the Southwest fractional 1/4 of Section 7, Town 4 South, Range 13 West, except the South 7 acres thereof. Together with and subject to a non-exclusive easement for pedestrian and vehicular ingress and egress over the following described parcel located in Decatur Township, County of Van Buren, commencing at the Southeast corner of Section 12, Town 4 South, Range 14 West, according to the government survey thereof; thence North 00 degrees 01 minute 04 seconds West 1317.32 feet along the East line of the Southeast 1/4 of said Section 12 to the North line of the South 1/2 of said Southeast 1/4; thence North 88 degrees 36 minutes 23 seconds West 837.58 feet along said North line to the centerline of County Road 669; thence North 30 degrees 05 minutes 17 seconds East 18.81 feet along said centerline to the place of beginning; thence continuing North 30 degrees 05 minutes 17 seconds East 18.81 feet along said centerline; thence South 88 degrees 36 minutes 23 seconds East 245.88 feet parallel with and 33.0 feet North of said North line; thence South 01 degree 23 minutes 37 seconds West 16.50 feet; thence North 88 degrees 36 minutes 23 seconds West 254.94 feet parallel with said North line to the place of beginning. Also together with and subject to a 16.5 foot wide non-exclusive easement for vehicular and pedestrian ingress and egress across real property located in Decatur Township, Van Buren County, Michigan, described as the North 16.5 feet of that certain property described as: Commencing at the Southeast corner of Section 12, Town 4 South, Range 14 West; thence North 00 degrees 01 minute 04 seconds West along the East section line 608.40 feet (also recorded as North 00 degrees 03 minutes 02 seconds West 608.25 feet); thence North 00 degrees 01 minute 04 seconds West (also recorded as North 00 degrees 03 minutes 02 seconds West) along the East section line 441.27 feet to the beginning; thence North 88 degrees 37 minutes 06 seconds West 619.66 feet; thence North 00 degrees 02 minutes 13 seconds West (also recorded as North 00 degrees 00 minutes 12 seconds West) 284.30 feet to a line 16.5 feet North of and parallel with the North line of the Southeast 1/4 of the Southeast 1/4 of section; thence South 88 degrees 36 minutes 23 seconds East (also recorded as South 88 degrees 39 minutes 00 seconds East) 619.49 feet to the East section line; thence South 00 degrees 01 minute 04 seconds East (also recorded as South 00 degrees 02 minutes 07 seconds East) along the East section line 284.64 feet to beginning
Common street address (if any): 34297 County Road 669, Lawton, MI 49065-9425
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: February 26, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1585565

(02-26)(03-19)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Jason Garcia; Atty: Team J; 1st Pub: 2/19/2026; Atty File #: 528265F01; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on March 19, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Jason Garcia, married man
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): AMERIHOME MORTGAGE COMPANY, LLC
Date of Mortgage: June 14, 2024
Date of Mortgage Recording: July 1, 2024
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $287,159.24
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Pine Grove, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: Lot 1, Woodland Estates, according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Liber 8 of Plats, page 157, Van Buren County Records.
Common street address (if any): 33610 Pinedale Ln, Gobles, MI 49055-8226
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: February 19, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1584882

(02-19)(03-12)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Douglas A Clark; Atty: SOTTILE and BARILE PLLC - SOTTILE and BARILE PLLC; 1st Pub: 2/12/2026; Atty File #: MF2512008; Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE THIS FIRM IS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION WE OBTAIN WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT THE NUMBER BELOW IF YOU ARE IN ACTIVE DUTY. ATTN PURCHASERS: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Under the power of sale contained herein in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or a cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in VAN BUREN County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on March 19, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE SALE – Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Douglas A. Clark and Brenda M. Clark, a married couple, original mortgagors, to Citifinancial, Inc., dated March 18, 2009, and recorded March 31, 2009 in Liber 1516, Page 577, in VAN BUREN County records, Michigan, and assigned to CitiFinancial Servicing LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability Company by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on June 30, 2017 in Liber 1654, Page 815, and assigned to Bayview Loan Servicing, LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability Company by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on June 30, 2017 in Liber 1654, Page 816, and assigned to Nationstar Mortgage LLC by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on September 20, 2022 in Liber 1743, Page 666 and assigned to U.S. Bank Trust National Association, as Trustee of the LB-TIKI Series V Trust by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on May 8, 2023 in Liber1752, Page 618 and assigned to U.S. Bank Trust National Association, as Trustee of the LB-Ranch Series V Trust by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on May 8, 2023 in Liber 1752, Page 619, and, on which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of Ninety Two Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty Nine and 74/100 dollars ($92,959.74). Said premises are situated in the City of DOWAGIAC, County of VAN BUREN, and State of Michigan, and particularly described as: Lot 3, Lakeland Terrace according to the recorded plat thereof, as recorded in Liber 5 of Plats, Page 35, Van Buren County Records Property Address:66901 M 152, Dowagiac, Michigan 49047 Parcel No.: 80-12-120-002-00 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Dated: February 12, 2026 For more information, please call: (513) 444-4100 Sottile and Barile PLLC Attorneys for Plaintiff 394 Wards Corner Boulevard, Suite 180 Loveland, OH 45140 File MF2512008 - Moore, Brenda - JR

(02-14)(03-07)

Porter Township, VBCO, March Board of Review

March 3rd, 2026 – Organizational Meeting will be held at the Township Hall, located at 88040 M-40, Lawton at 12:00pm. No appeals will be heard at this meeting.

March 9th – Official MBOR, held at the Township Hall from 9:30am – 3:30pm. Petitions will be heard by appointment and these can be scheduled by calling Krys at (269) 228-3331 or email assessor@portertwpvbco.gov Mailed or Emailed petitions must be received by March 9th at 5:00pm. Walk-ins will be seen as permits.

March 10th – MBOR, held at the Township Hall from 3:00pm – 9:00pm, located at 88040 M-40, Lawton. Appeals will be heard by appointment, which can be scheduled by calling Krys at (269) 228-3331 or emailing assessor@portertwpvbco.gov Mailed or Emailed petitions must be received by March 9th at 5:00pm. Walk-ins will be seen as permits.

Paw Paw Courier Leader – legals@vineyardpress.biz
Marcellus News – editor@marcellusnews.com

BLOOMINGDALE TOWNSHIP NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING

The Bloomingdale Township Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed Budget for fiscal year 2026/2027 at the Bloomingdale Municipal Building Located at:
109 E. Kalamazoo St.,
Bloomingdale, MI 49026
On March 18, 2026 @ 6:00pm

*The property tax millage rate Proposed to be levied to support the Proposed budget will be the subject of this hearing. *

A copy of the budget is available for public inspection at the Bloomingdale Township Clerks office, located at 109 E. Kalamazoo St., Bloomingdale, MI.

Bloomingdale Township Clerk,
Melanie Kelly

NOTICE OF PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING ALMENA TOWNSHIP FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 PROPOSED BUDGET

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Almena Township Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed township budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year at the Almena Township Hall, located at 27625 CR 375, Paw Paw MI 49079 on Monday, March 9, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.

The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing. A copy of the proposed budget is available for public inspection at the Almena Township Hall.

The Almena Township Board will provide the necessary and reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting upon request to the Almena Township Board by writing or calling the Almena Township Hall located at 27625 CR 375, Paw Paw MI 49079 or (269) 668-6910 M-W-Th 9 a.m. to 4 p.m

Sandra Rickli
Clerk, Almena Township

GOBLES CITY 2026 NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Review will meet at the City Hall, 105 E. Main St., Gobles, Michigan 49055, to examine and review the 2026 assessment roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

- Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 3:00 pm Organizational Meeting
- Monday, March 9, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm
- Monday, March 16, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

And on such additional days as required to hear all persons who have given notice of the desire to be heard until assessment rolls have been revised, corrected, and approved.
APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. Contact the Assessor at 269-655-1144 or by email at ben.apgllc@gmail.com for further information. Letter appeals will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 16, 2026. Address listed below.

Tentative ratios and estimated multipliers for 2026 are as follows:

Agricultural	48.66%	1.0275
Commercial	48.10%	1.0395
Industrial	50.00%	1.0000
Residential	46.48%	1.0757
Personal Property	50.00%	1.0000

Tentative equalization factor of 1.0000 for all classes is expected after completion of Board of Review.
Ben Brousseau, Assessor Gobles City

Gobles City Board Meetings are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or disability.
American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The City will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven-(7) days' notice to Gobles City. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Gobles City by writing or calling.

Paula Sipes
Gobles City Clerk
105 E. Main St
P.O. Box 38
Gobles, MI 49055

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• AUCTION •

ID STORAGE
75577 14 th Ave., South Haven MI 49090. Auction of units. #32 M.Jackson, #33 J.Green, #58 T. Sullivan &; #91 A.McNair &; S.Phillips.
As is where is Sunday March 29 th at 10:00 am.

MEDICARE GURU
Call
Janet Bontrager
Insurance Advisor
(269) 998-6977

Columbia Township Budget Public Hearing Notice

The Columbia Township Board will hold a public hearing on the **proposed township budget for Fiscal Year 2026/2027** at Columbia Township Hall, 53053 County Road, Grand Junction, Michigan, on **Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.** The purpose of the hearing is to receive public comments on the proposed budget. A copy of the budget is available for public inspection at **Columbia Township Hall, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

The Columbia Township Board will provide reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting upon **3 days' notice.**

Kara Hartmann, Township Clerk
53053 County Road, Grand Junction, MI 49056
Phone: (269) 434-6227
E-Mail: clerk@columbiatwp.com

ALMENA TOWNSHIP
VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 103

ALMENA TOWNSHIP CEMETERY ORDINANCE

On February 18, 2026, the Almena Township Board adopted Ordinance No.103, an Ordinance to protect the public health, safety and general welfare by establishing regulations relating to the operation, control, and management of cemeteries owned by the Township of Almena, Van Buren County, Michigan; to provide penalties for the violation of the ordinance, and to repeal all ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict therewith.

The Ordinance contains the following sections and catch lines: Section 1: Title, which is the Almena Township Cemetery Ordinance; Section 2: Definitions; Section 3: Ordinance Applicability, which is all Township Cemeteries; Section 4: General Rules and Prohibitions; Section 5: Foundation and Markers; Section 6: Cemetery Maintenance and Decorations; Section 7: Sale, Transfer, or Repurchase of Burial Spaces; Section 8: Interment, Disinterment, and Reinterment; Section 9: Records; Section 10: Fees; Section 11: Indigent Persons; Section 12: Forfeiture of Vacant Burial Spaces; Section 13: Cemetery General Fund; Section 14: Perpetual Care; Section 15: Waivers; Section 16: Appeals; Section 17: Enforcement and Penalties; Section 18: Severability; Section 19: Effective Date, which is thirty (30) days after the publication of this notice of adoption; Section 20: Repeal, which repeals all ordinances in conflict herewith.

A true copy of the proposed Ordinance is available for inspection at the Almena Township Hall, 27625 County Road 375, Paw Paw, MI 49079. The office hours are 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Sandra Rickli, Clerk
ALMENA TOWNSHIP
almenaclerk@comcast.net
(269) 668-6910

VILLAGE OF PAW PAW
PUBLIC NOTICE
NOXIOUS WEEDS WITHIN THE VILLAGE OF PAW PAW

Please take notice: The Village of Paw Paw has determined that the uncontrolled growth of tall grass and noxious weeds are detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare of the residents of the Village, and constitute a public nuisance when found on any land in any subdivision of the Village in which buildings have been erected on 60 percent of the lots included in the subdivision; and on any lot along all improved streets, whether paved or unpaved, in common usage for a depth of ten rods (165 feet) or the depth of the lot, whichever is less.

Noxious Weeds include Canada thistle (Circium Arvense), dodders (any species of Cuscuta), mustards (charlock, black mustard and Indian mustard, species of Brassica or Sinapis), wild carrot (Daucus carota), bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis), perennial sowthistle (Sonchus arvensis), hoary alyssum (Berteros incana), ragweed (ambrosia elatior l.) and poison ivy (rhus toxicondendron), Poison Sumac (toxicodendron vernix) and **other plants, grass, vines or other growth whenever in the opinion of the board of trustees it is regarded as a common nuisance.**

The owner of land on which noxious weeds are found growing shall destroy the weeds before they reach a seed-bearing stage and prevent their regrowth or shall prevent them from becoming a detriment to public health. **A person who violates any provision of this article is responsible for a municipal civil infraction,** subject to payment of a civil fine of not less than $50 or more than $500, plus costs and other sanctions for each infraction. Each day on which any violation of this article continues is a separate offense and shall be subject to penalties or sanctions as a separate offense.

Tall grass and weeds not cut by June 1 of this year (2026) will be cut by the Village and the owner of the property charged with the cost under the provisions of the Village Code.

VILLAGE COUNCIL
VILLAGE OF LAWTON
VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

(Ordinance No. 01-2026)

At a regular meeting of the Village Council for the Village of Lawton held at 125 S Main St Lawton, Michigan on February 24, 2026 and commencing at 7:00 p.m., the following ordinance was offered for adoption by Councilmember E. Dudek and was seconded by Councilmember Tanis :

AN ORDINANCE TO CHANGE THE VILLAGE FISCAL YEAR BY ENACTING A NEW SECTION 32.20 OF CHAPTER 32 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES FOR THE VILLAGE OF LAWTON

THE VILLAGE OF LAWTON (the "Village) ORDAINS:

Article 1. Enacting of Section 32.20 Section 32.20 of Chapter 32 of the Code of Ordinances of Village of Lawton is enacted as follows:

§ 32.20 FISCAL YEAR
Commencing July 1, 2026, the fiscal year for the Village shall commence July 1 of each year.

Article 2. Repealer.
Any other ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this Ordinance are repealed to the extent of any such conflict.

Article 3. Effective Date.
This Ordinance is effective upon its publication in the manner required by law.

The vote regarding the adoption of this ordinance was as follows:
YEAS: Appleby, Tanis, G. Dudek, E. Dudek, Peterson, Raber
NAYS:
ABSENT: Turner
ORDINANCE NO. 01-2026 DECLARED ADOPTED.

Josh Appleby, President
Brittany Rathbun, Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I, Brittany Rathbun, the Clerk of the Village of Lawton, hereby attest that the foregoing is a true and accurate copy of an ordinance adopted by the Village Council of the Village of Lawton at a meeting of the Village Council called and held in accordance with the required statutory procedures on the date first specified above.

Brittany Rathbun, Clerk

TOWNSHIP OF PAW PAW
2026 NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Review will meet at the Township Hall, 114 N. Gremps St. Paw Paw, MI 49079, to examine and review the 2026 Assessment Roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 10:00 am Organizational Meeting
Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm Monday, March 16, 2026, Noon to 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm

and on such additional days as required to hear all persons who have given notice of the desire to be heard until assessment rolls have been revised, corrected, and approved.

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. Contact the Assessor at 269-655-1144 or by email at ***BEN.APGLLC@GMAIL.COM*** for further information. Letter appeals will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 16, 2026. Address listed below.

Tentative ratios and estimated multipliers for 2026 are as follows:

Agricultural	46.49%	1.0755
Commercial	45.76%	1.0927
Industrial	49.52%	1.0097
Residential	48.07%	1.0401
Personal Property	50.00%	1.0000

Tentative equalization factor of 1.0000 for all classes is expected after completion of Board of Review.

Tom Palenick, Supervisor Paw Paw Township
Ben Brousseau, Assessor Paw Paw Township

Paw Paw Township Board Meetings are open to all without regard to race, national origin, sex, or disability.

American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to Paw Paw Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Paw Paw Township by writing or calling.

Paw Paw Township Clerk
114 N. Gremps St.
Paw Paw, MI 49079
(269) 657-4340

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
VILLAGE OF PAW PAW
PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission of the Village of Paw Paw will hold a Public Hearing on **Thursday, April 2nd, 2026, at 7:00 pm,** at the Paw Paw Township Hall, located at 114 N. Gremps Street, Paw Paw, Michigan to consider the following application:

APPLICANT	Ashley Erickson
APPLICATION TYPE	Special Land Use Permit Request for Group Child Care Home (7-12 minor children)
PROJECT ADDRESS	408 W. North Street
PROJECT PARCEL NUMBER	80-47-350-013-00
ZONING OF SUBJECT PARCEL	R-2 – SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST	The applicant requests a special land use permit to operate a group child care home (7-12 minor children) in a residence that is currently licensed to operate a child care family home (1-6 minor children)

This application is available at the Village of Paw Paw offices for public examination and review during normal business hours. Interested persons may submit comments in writing before the public hearing, or appear in person at the public hearing to become part of the hearing record. The Village of Paw Paw will provide necessary and reasonable aids and services for disabled persons upon 5 days prior notice to the Village Offices at (269) 657-3148.

Kathy Larson, Chair
Village of Paw Paw Planning Commission

Columbia Township
NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW HEARINGS

The Board of Review will be meeting in March to review the Assessment Roll and hear appeals. All meetings will be held at the Columbia Township Hall, 53033 CR 390, Grand Junction, Michigan 49056. The organizational meeting will be held on March 2nd, 2026 at 7:00 am. No appeals will be heard at the organizational meeting. *The appeal hearings will be held on March 9th from 3:00 Đm to 9:00 pm and March 10th. from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm* APPEALS ARE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.
Please contact the Columbia Township Assessor, Danielle Golembiewski by phone 269-225-9006 or by email at ***Assessor@ColumbiaTwp.com*** to make an appointment.
If the times available are not convenient, you may appeal by letter. Send letters and supporting documentation to Columbia Township, PO Box 323, Grand Junction, MI 49056. All letter appeals must be received by 2:00 p.m. 3-10-2026.

Monday March 9th **3:00pm to 9:00pm**
Wednesday March 10th **9:00am to 3:00pm**

Assessments have been adjusted to result in anticipated multipliers of 1.0000 for all classes. With "Proposal A" in effect, the Taxable Values, excluding new construction and ownership transfers, are capped at the inflation rate of 2.7% for the 2026 tax year. Taxes are based on the Taxable Value. Also, note that if you should have a Principal Residence Exemption on your property and this is not noted on your notice, you should contact the Assessor.

2026 Starting Ratios are as follows:		Factors:	
Ag:	49.31	Ag:	1.0139
Com:	46.18	Com:	1.0827
Ind:	49.21	Ind:	1.0160
Res:	46.68	Res:	1.0711
Personal:	50.00	Personal:	1.0000

Columbia Township Assessor, Danielle Golembiewski

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